

Remarks

Claims 1, 5-7 and 15-22 are pending in the application. Claims 1, 5-7, 21 and 22 are allowed, claims 15, 16, 19 and 20 are rejected, and claims 17, 18 are objected to. By this paper, claim 15 is amended, claim 17 is canceled, and claims 23-27 are added. Based on the following, allowance of each of the pending claims is requested.

Claim Rejections—35 U.S.C. § 102

The Examiner rejected claims 15-16 and 19 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,321,696 (Nishioka et al.). By this paper, claim 15 is amended to include all of the limitations from claim 17, which was objected to. By this paper, claim 17 is canceled without prejudice to facilitate issuance of a patent containing the allowed claims. Applicants note that it is their intent to pursue allowance of the rejected claims in a continuation application. Claims 16 and 19 each depend directly from amended claim 15, which is believed to be allowable. Therefore, claims 16 and 19 are also believed to be allowable.

Claim Rejections—35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner rejected claim 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,712,133 (Kyrtos et al.). Claim 20 depends directly from amended claim 15, which, as noted above, is believed to be allowable. Therefore, claim 20 is also believed to be allowable.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner objected to claims 17 and 18 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated that each would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of its respective base claim and any intervening claims. As noted

above, claim 15 has been amended to incorporate all of the limitations from claim 17, and is thus believed to be allowable. In addition, by this paper, new claims 23-27 are added. Claim 23 is an independent claim containing all of the limitations of original claims 15 and 18. Therefore, claim 23 is also believed to be allowable. Each of the claims 24-27 depend directly from claim 23, and therefore each of these dependent claims is also believed to be allowable.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the allowance of claims 1, 5-7 and 21-22, and request allowance of each of the remaining claims.

Respectfully submitted,

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